



Pick Your Path to Health

A Prescription for Spirituality

Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Wait! Take a deep breath. Don't start this New Year without your prescription for spirituality.

If you're asking, "Where do I begin?" then you have already begun. Explore what works for you. Do you prefer private prayer, attending church services, doing physical exercise, reading, or just serving your community? Choose something you enjoy, and it won't feel like another chore.

"I've always been interested in spiritual things," says Robin Liten-Tejada of Arlington, Virginia.

Liten-Tejada says she particularly derives strength from women's energy and power so she enjoys group activities and women's retreats. She says it's like finding "the goddesses within us."

What inspires you? Is it?

- A belief in something greater than yourself
- A sense of connection with all living things
- An awareness of the meaning of life
- The development of values

Once you know what it is, you'll be halfway down the road to spiritual well being.

If you associate spirituality with religion, then you probably participate in religious services, and you know how it feels to absorb the music, feel the pageantry, reflect on the scriptures, and enjoy the company of others who believe in something greater.

Or perhaps, you find spiritual richness outside of religious circles. You may get joy from listening to your favorite music, taking a walk and reflecting on the beauty of the day, or reading something inspirational.

No matter your preference, imagine what it would be like to find this same spirituality in everything you do and in everyone you encounter. You can!

Designing Your Own Prescription

Simply weave aspects of your spirituality into every area of your life. Here are some quick tips to get you started.

- Surround yourself with people and things that inspire and motivate you
- Look for deeper meaning in everyday situations
- Become more aware of your own presence and that of others

For some of us, practicing our spirituality comes easily, for others it may take some work, but remember it's worth the effort. And you may live longer.

Good for Your Health

A growing body of research has associated better health with spirituality. In a 28-year-long study of 2600 people funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers found that those attending services weekly were more likely than those attending less or not at all to establish and maintain good health behaviors. A previously published study by the same research team found that those who attended religious services weekly or more had a 33 percent greater chance of living longer.

Conduct your own experiment. Begin this New Year by exploring your beauty, your enthusiasm, your hope, your imagination, your joy, your sorrows, your kindness, and so many more of these qualities that make you who you are. Do more of the things that bring joy to your life and make you feel good about yourself, and surround yourself with things that inspire you to be a better person.

Take this prescription for spirituality and you'll be on the road to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign or to request weekly health tips by e-mail, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or TDD at 1-888-220-5446 or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov>.